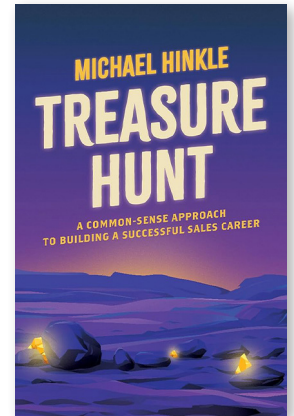


Treasure Hunt

A Common-Sense Approach to Building a Successful Sales Career

by **Michael Hinkle**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Sales is the lifeblood of every business. Unfortunately, most people view sales as a rat race when it really is a rewarding treasure hunt.

The book *Treasure Hunt: A Common-Sense Approach to Building a Successful Sales Career* lays out a surprisingly simple and uniquely interesting approach to building a successful career in sales. It offers meaningful strategies for building relationships and wealth simultaneously.

By taking us on an insightful journey of his own fruitful sales career, author Michael Hinkle offers us efficient tactical tips and common-sense tools to become trusted salespersons, solve issues for prospects, build meaningful connections, and combat negative setbacks that are inevitable in the industry.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to carve a long-term sales career.
- How to build meaningful connections with gatekeepers, decision-makers, and clients.
- How to build a solid reputation as a trustworthy problem-solver.
- How to heal from negative setbacks and disappointments.

Introduction

Sales is a treasure hunt. Imagine you're standing at the edge of a massive field. The field is littered with thousands of rocks of all shapes and sizes. Now, imagine a few of those rocks are hiding something of great value. Some have a huge chunk of gold underneath; others may have smaller pieces of gold or silver. But a large percentage of those rocks have absolutely nothing underneath them at all. What would you do?

Some treasure hunters start out all hyped up. But when the initial results disappoint them, they give up. Others may twaddle at the edge of the field and look under a few rocks, at first attempting to use a system. They might get lucky a few times but they soon become jaded and leave the field completely. The above-average treasure hunter sets a course of action to turn over every rock in the field. They will literally leave no stone unturned. Maybe they even find some rocks with treasure underneath, but it's frozen in the ground- it's the wrong time to collect. So, they continue moving, but with a plan to come back when the ground has thought. Finding success in sales is really no different from becoming this third type of treasure hunter.

Sales is hard. The root of sales burnout is twofold:

- First, it's a mindset problem. Salespeople are often focused on transactions when they should be focused on building relationships.
- Second, it's a tactical problem. Salespeople are over-dependent on tools and under-dependent on skills.

In this book, I want to tackle both these problems side-by-side because they can't be separated. That said, it's now time to go hunting.

Chapter 1: The Farmer and the Hunter

Hunters are always on the move because their prey is on the move, too. Likewise, sales is not a static environment. It's constantly in motion.

Sales is just the switch you flip to transform a problem from unsolved to solved. Start by viewing your sales career the same as building a business. Sales has gotten a bad reputation as the result of bad sales strategies – and bad salespeople. But every business needs sales to exist. Businesses that fail to be sales-driven don't get to stay in business for long. The sales rep mindset should be an entrepreneurial mindset. The most successful salespeople hunt for their own treasure. How do they do this? By solving problems. The world

is filled with people, which means it's filled with problems. Salespeople play an essential role in solving those problems.

Sales Farmers are salespeople who get introduced to a client already doing business with the company. Their role is to service an existing account with the responsibility to “tend the soil and take care of the crop.” They don't venture off to find new deals. Their style of patience is rooted in the ability to wait.

Sales Hunters, on the other hand, are salespeople who go out and look for new clients. They seek out people who can possibly benefit from their product or service. It's a mindset built on long-term rewards through building a relationship, not just conducting a transaction. Sales Hunters are always on the move and combine two key qualities: patience and tenacity. It's critical to get these two hand-in-hand.

Established Hunters have prospects that already know the company and the product they have to offer. For Established Hunters, the focus tends to be on why your solution is the best for the prospect's specific set of problems since there is already a reputation preceding you.

Chapter 2: Treasure Hunting Basics

The markets we serve are always moving. Ebbing and flowing – like water in a stream. When it comes to the basics of treasure hunting, it's important to understand how everything in life ebbs and flows – whether it's your personal or professional life. Hunting means intention. It means purpose and drive. For you to be successful, you need the right tools on hand. Different types of hunting require different tools – and some tools change over time. It's the same in sales, so this isn't about discussing every possible scenario you could encounter. Instead, we're going to discuss the timeless basics of both your mentality and tactical strategy for Sales Hunting.

Tool #1: Redefine the Cold Call

The biggest reason many people dislike cold calling is a fear of rejection. But rejection in sales is inevitable. By shifting how we view the “cold call” from a disembodied voice on the other end of the phone to a warm, living human making a connection, it becomes a powerful tool. It's not something we have to fear or loathe. It just needs to be redefined and seen in its proper context.

Tool #2: Adapt or Die

When you're selling a service or product generally regarded

When you're selling a service or product generally regarded as valuable in your market, it's easy to become complacent.

as valuable in your market, it's easy to become complacent. But remember, even the Roman Empire got carved up and disappeared. You have to remain alert, knowing a change in your industry or product could occur in a split second – and you'll miss it if you're not on the lookout.

Tool #3: Don't Give Up

Perseverance is a discipline. Don't give up. Dig in. Go to every sales appointment with the goal of landing a deal. Will it happen every time? Of course not! But when the meeting is over, you immediately analyze what went right and whether you got closer to achieving the deal.

Tool #4: Breaking the Ice – First Impressions

So you've found yourself with a new opportunity. Now what? First things first: you need to break the ice and get to know the client and their business. You don't have to overthink it – simply ask questions. What is their business? Do they even need your services? If not, that's not necessarily a loss. Who's to say they won't need it later on? Can they refer you to someone who does? They're going to remember the salesperson who was genuinely interested in them beyond the transaction.

Tool #5: Two-Way Flow

The entire sales process is a two-way street, or what I like to call a “two-way flow,” especially in the early days of getting to know a client. Not only are they deciding if you're the right fit for them, but you should ask yourself the same question! Are they the right client for you?

Tool #6 Follow Up or Lose Out

Availability is an underrated value in sales. It depends on where you are at in the sales process. If you're in the early days, follow your client's lead by asking what follow-up works for them – email, phone call, or another in-person meeting. This shows you put their interest first. You don't want to be the one who checks in once every day and is extra pushy.

Tool #7 Solve Problems

You're going to make mistakes and problems are going to

happen. Always answer the problem first. Don't over-talk or over-promise before you have a real idea of what to do. Along the way, make sure to update the client on the steps you're taking, even if you're waiting for an answer from somebody.

Tool #8: The Power of No

“No” is not indifference. In fact, “No” should be treated as a call for more information. Your clients are telling you they want to know “the why,” so help them understand why you are the right salesperson for them and why you're invested in their future.

Chapter 3: The Gatekeepers

Today's gatekeepers may not have a sword or spear in hand. Instead, they might be sitting at a desk, armed with a laptop and phone. Whether it's the lobby receptionist or the executive assistant, these company gatekeepers don't dictate your life or death, but it might feel like it at times. How you treat and interact with gatekeepers will help determine – and even direct – your success in sales.

But how do you navigate through gatekeepers? How do you get around to a gatekeeper if they are locking you out? For starters, don't be afraid to ask the gatekeeper for help. By starting an honest dialogue, asking polite follow-up questions, and remaining respectful, they'll also help clue you in about how the DM likes to do business. Repeated denials can be frustrating, but always remember, they are just doing their job, too! Once you're in a good place, the gatekeepers can become a well of information for you. No business happens without establishing a relationship first. Treat gatekeepers like the diamonds they are and they will return your (metaphorical) investment.

Chapter 4: Nurturing Relationships

Establishing a relationship and connection in sales is a process – each interaction is like stocking up on your ammunition. If you don't take the time to “stock up” before pulling

the trigger on a deal, nothing will happen. Here's the thing: no one cares how much you know until they know how much you care. It's OK to remind an established client or prospect, "I'm on your team, but fortunately for you, I'm being paid by my company." Start thinking of yourself as a zero-cost employee for them, ready to handle their interests.

Availability is the best ability in sales. Sure, it can be tough to respond to phone calls when we get busy. But understand that when a client reaches out to you, they are making a statement to both you and themselves that they see you as a critical part of their team. So – to put it simply – take the call. Decide to wait a day and you leave the door wide open for your competition to step through.

Before any relationship – professional or personal – begins, what do we look for in the other person? We look for value. In sales, you can prove your worth before you're even servicing the customer by being comfortable with what you do and how you get your job done. The real learning begins when you have an actual conversation. Figure out what pesky little problems gnaw at them early in the morning. What result will make them look good to their boss? If you can discover those issues and provide a realistic solution for them, you've already provided more value than you can imagine.

But how do you keep those relationships and connections healthy? Remember, a hunter is always moving. So get out, move, and talk to everyone, because you never know what opportunity will clue in to find your next piece of treasure.

Chapter 5: Overcoming Objections

Objections are often just a wall of fear coming from a customer. Fear you can't actually solve their problem. Fear you aren't able to deliver on what you promise. Fear they'll regret the decision later on. The objections you face will be very specific to your product and service – and to the needs of the client.

When a salesperson assumes what a customer wants through nonverbal actions, it communicates to the prospect that you care more about yourself and your commission than their needs. Remember, your goal is not to convince your prospect you're right. It's to convince them they are right in making whatever decision they make.

Focus on the pain points whenever they knock at your door. Be responsive, show up, send a couple of quick emails, or take the time for a few phone calls. There will always be a

high reward attached to your efforts.

Negotiation is a major part of sales and a vital skill for every salesperson to cultivate. It's important to have the ability to negotiate a deal that works best for all parties involved. Enter the negotiation phase with a clear understanding of the goal and purpose that needs to be achieved. Choose to be pro-client in front of the company and pro-company in front of the client.

Chapter 6: Building Your Sales Business

Building a business is tough. For those of us in sales, though, we're in a fascinating position. Like an entrepreneur, we're driven by a desire to obtain the greatest market share possible. Successful sales hunters build their sales businesses as if they are running their own businesses.

As a hunter, you may never even see a 20-point buck for years, but the more prevalent 8-point and 10-pointers will prepare you for the day the big buck decides to show up. The entrepreneurial mindset from my notary business opened doors and prepared me for bigger opportunities down the road. That's why it matters now what you do with your sales business. You never know what's next.

Stat taking self-inventory. Find how you can be different in a place where everyone is selling the same thing, the same way, on the same day. Envision how you want to be known throughout the industry. When people hear your name, what's going to be the first word they associate with it?

Show, don't tell. If you want to set yourself apart from the crowd, you have to follow through with action. Use your words to set the bar. Use action to follow through. Without having a business-building mindset in sales, it's easy to get complacent or even bored. If you are like most sales professionals, money is the ultimate motivator. Let's just be honest about it. But how much money could you make selling products? Well, that's actually your choice. This is both the beauty and the beast in sales.

Having a business-building mindset in sales naturally gives you a sense of ownership, which generates motivation and drive. You want to own your business, not be owned by the business. Taking ownership means taking control of your identity and highlighting what you want to be known for.

Chapter 7: Owning Your Reputation

Your reputation is present when you're absent. Personally, I

Your word is your brand. Always under-promise and over-deliver.

want to be represented well when I'm not physically in the room. I want to be known as someone who honors his word.

Your word is your brand. Always under-promise and over-deliver. You don't want to be caught looking up in bewilderment when you have to meet your own expectations. Instead, set the bar in a place where you can always raise it higher with more experience and success you achieve.

Like mistakes, change is inevitable. Also like mistakes, how you navigate through sudden change will impact your reputation and your clients. Your job is to mitigate the impact a sudden change can have on your client and get them up to speed ASAP. Become known as the person who is prepared for anything. Tell your clients you are not only focused on their needs now but you will be prepared for what's coming down the road too.

Now, how clients perceive you is vital to your success. What about how they perceive your company, though? Remember, clients will come and go, but the ones who stay and the ones who return will be because of your reputation. Communicate you're more interested in their business rather than your own business. You can't own or control luck, the company, your manager, or your clients. But you can own and control your reputation.

Chapter 8: Don't Follow the Crowd

When you don't follow the crowd, you not only survive but thrive. Salespeople must be proactive. They should start looking for potential problems even when everything seems to be going well. Be the person who takes the extra steps when times are good. Be the one who's always looking for ways to improve, stay ahead of the curve, and anticipate the unexpected. Because in business, as in life, the crowd waits for the storm to pass. While they wait, you could use the storm as an opportunity to thrive in the rain.

The digital era has unquestionably transformed the way we live work and communicate. "Sales Gurus," as I like to call them, can be found with a simple search on Google or YouTube. As exciting as the digital age has been, particularly in

sales, it's vital to use caution. This book isn't about getting rich quickly because let's face it, those books never work. It's about creating the lifestyle and mindset that keeps you at the forefront of your industry.

I want you to build your own business from the tools you already have available at your disposal. Ask yourself questions like, "What is my way?" Or "How do I cater these practices to my ability?" Remember, who you are and what you want to be is the value of your brand and reputation. Be true to yourself. If you're authentic, then you are trustworthy.

Chapter 9: Nuances Within Sales

The sales industry has many nuances that deserve careful consideration. Let's explore these distinctions to help you gain the perspective needed to succeed.

Commission-Only Pay Structure

This structure is tough. But it forces you to focus on the present and gives you the drive to succeed. When you take the leap of faith and go for a commission-only structure, you will see the benefits in the long run. The skills you will learn are valuable and the money you make will be greater too. But is Commission only the right choice for you? This is what only you can answer for yourself.

Salary with Commission Pay Structure

If you are just starting out and want to hone your skills, learn the lay of the industry, and need to offset the mental stress of finding the sale right away, a Salary Plus Commission structure might benefit you the most. But if you're more seasoned and have a decent pipeline working for you, you may be better off switching to a Commission-Only structure where you earn a higher percentage.

Company Structure

A company structure is an important aspect to understand before you get to work. The majority of companies are siloed, aside from extremely small businesses. To clarify, the bigger the company, the more silos it will have. Being part of a large, siloed organization can often provide numerous

opportunities for growth and development. But it's important to figure out how to meet the customers' needs while selling the value of the company. This means you have to strike a balance between meeting the customers' needs while not blaming other silos for any issues that arise.

If you think of your sales career as your own business, then your ultimate objective is to expand. Referrals are one of the best ways you can achieve this swiftly and efficiently. However, referrals are not something you can simply expect from your clients- they must be earned. To receive referrals yourself, you have to leave a spark – make a lasting impression. A good practice that should be in everyone's repertoire is knowing **WHEN** to ask for a referral compared to **HOW** you ask. When you establish strong relationships and deliver exceptional service, whether in a single point of contact or a long-term account your servicing, success, and growth will follow.

Chapter 10: As Your Business Grows

Not everyone will value what you're offering. But if your goal is to bring value to everything you do, and to take pride in your work, then don't waste time with the people who don't value you, your time, or your service.

As your sales business grows, so do your responsibilities. More responsibilities mean more opportunities. With more opportunities, it can be easy to fall into the trap of working harder than working smarter. Always remember that you've got to be the clearinghouse. You're not here to process every internal process, create the product, or even solve every single problem that comes your way. Your primary job is to sell the vision and value of the product, get it to the right

people, and then not get in the way.

Be good at giving others the opportunity to shine. Find ways to balance out the workload and responsibilities. Everyone needs a win, so set up easy wins to build confidence and establish positive momentum. And when your team succeeds, make sure everyone is recognized for their contributions.

Conclusion

I hope the lessons in the book have given you a renewed drive and fresh perspective to hunt your next big deal. If you feel too far gone, if you think it's too late for you to turn the ship around, I promise you it's not. If you take one idea you've learned in the book and apply it today, you'll already be a better Sales Hunter than you were yesterday. Finally, remember there are no truly lost opportunities if you have learned from failure. You can always get back up, shake yourself off, and try again!



Michael Hinkle is the Founder of JBI, a Los Angeles-based sales consulting and coaching business, with a specific interest in teaching sales professionals to become Sales Hunters and create business opportunities from scratch. His three decades in sales have included twenty-plus years with a Fortune 500 company, where he rose to become a Vice President while continuing to manage a productive sales pipeline and foster client relationships. As a husband and father to three grown children, he loves to recharge through travel and has a long history of volunteering with Boy Scouts of America, Home Aid, and various youth sports boards.

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